(b) and (c) Following measures are being taken to ensure prompt repair of such telephones.

(i) Monitoring of fault repairs by Senior Officers.

(ii) Rehabilitation/upgradation of external plant.

(iii) Replacement of long spans of overhead alignment by under ground cables in phased manner.

(iv) Daily testing of VPTs from telephone exchanges.

(v) Formation of core groups in each SSA for prompt restoration of VPTs.

(vi) Replacement of telephone instruments having completed expiry period in phased manner.

(vii) Induction of modern technologies like Wireless in Local Loop, TDMA/PMP, Satellite in rural areas.

(viii) Provision of generator sets to take care of long duration power break down.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Development of Air Force station, Bihta in Bihar

1675. PROF. (SHRIMATI)BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 174, given in the Rajya Sabha on 24th July,2001, and state:

(a) whether the Committee constituted to enquire into Patna aircrash has recommended the development of Air Force station, Bihta as an alternative to the existing airport; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto;

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) and (b) Apart from certain short term measures the Committee constituted to enquire into Patna aircrash has also, *inter-alia,* suggested to consider development of Bihta Air Force station for civilian air traffic, keeping in view the future growth of air traffic and restrictions at the present Patna Airport.Views of defence

authorities are being obtained for use of Bihta Air Force Station for civilian air services operations.

Staff Strength of AI and IA

1676. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 4114, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th April, 2001, and state:

(a) whether the number of staff in Air India/Indian Airlines is in accordance with the international standards;

(b) whether any assessment has been made by Government in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) There are no norms prescribed for employee aircraft ratio and the same differs from airline to airline depending upon the opertional network, the type and extent of functions performed.

(b) and (c) Air India has taken following steps for rationalising man-power in order to reduce staff cost and make it viable:—

(i) Freeze on external recruitment in non-operational categories; (ii) Several posts of India based officers abroad have been abolished; (iii) Rolling back of retirement age from 60 to 58 years; (iv) Redeployment of employees from non-operational to operational areas; (v) Two voluntary schemes have been notified *viz.* shorter working week for a period of two years extendable upto five years.

As regard Indian Airlines, Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this direction are:—

(i) Roll back of retirement age from 60 to 58 years; (ii) Ban on direct recruitment; (iii) Non-filling up of non-operational posts; (iv) Induction of more aircraft through leasing.

Development of Airports of North-Eastern Region

†1677. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.